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TO THE PUBLIC.

THE first appearance of a new publication can scarcely fail to excite a considerable degree of interest. As it cannot but cause great anxiety in the mind of the author, so it generally raises equal curiosity in that of the public. It is somewhat like the introduction of a young person into company; every one is eager to observe, whether her appearance corresponds with the expectations previously excited, while the parent awaits, with a variety of mixed sensations, the moment that must irrevocably consign her beloved offspring to admiration or neglect. If such be the sensation produced in a greater or less degree by every work which issues from the press, it must be much heightened in the case of a periodical publication, where the merits of a few of the first numbers have so much influence in deciding the fate, not only of themselves, but of their successors. For these reasons, it will not be thought improper to give the reader a general idea of the present undertaking, the motives that excited the attempt, the inducements that encouraged its performance, and the general plan intended to be followed. Otherwise, perhaps, having conceived vague and incorrect notions of its nature and objects, he might contract a prejudice against it at the very outset, when he found, on entering, that the interior arrangements, though well adapted to the purposes for which it was intend-

ed, fell short of his expectations, or differed from others of the same description. This species of prejudication should be carefully guarded against; for, as in an extensive tract of country, the buildings usually resemble each other in their general design, though each differs from the rest in some particulars, in order to accommodate it to its situation; so, though all publications of the same kind as the present, have that general resemblance which shows them to be creatures of the same species, each is marked and distinguished by some peculiarity arising from local circumstances. From inadvertence to this, it frequently happens that the mind, already prepossessed in favour of some former production, without making allowance for these varieties, refers the new immediately and exactly to the old, and is determined, not so much by its intrinsic merit, as by its coincidence with, or deviation from its favourite standard of perfection.

But, before entering on the merits of the present work, it may be necessary to notice two objections. One of these, indeed, is of a very general nature, and every new publication is liable to it; the other chiefly affects those introduced under the same circumstances as the present.

It has been frequently asserted, that so far from encouraging new books, every means ought to be used to prevent their increase, and even to di-

tify every palate, a variety, as extensive as the diversity of tastes, is requisite. The book that is rejected by one class, finds admirers in another; the sentiment which is obscure in one light, strikes at once when placed in a different point of view. Like fire in the flint, though the mind be long insensible to the attempts of the writer, a single spark may be unexpectedly struck out, to light up a flame in the soul never after to be extinguished.

The other objection respects the local circumstances under which the present work appears, and affects every composition published in this part of the empire. We are, no doubt, in a distant province, remote from that great laboratory of learning whence every artificer draws the greater part of those materials which he afterwards, with so much mental labour and ingenuity, works up into articles of ornament and use; yet if we are deprived of the peculiar advantages, we are also free from the peculiar inconveniencies, from the prejudices, the parties, the jarring interests which distract and confuse that great metropolis. As spectators on an eminence, too distant to be biassed by their hopes and fears, yet near enough to view and judge of their operations, we view the different parties contending in the great field of science; we can calmly observe their movements, avoid their errors, and improve on their discoveries. Here we can behold the great machine in motion, observe its action, remark its several wheels and springs, without being stunned by its noise, or endangered by its vicinity. We see the various systems of politics and literature revolving each in its separate course, without being drawn into the vortex; and behold the great luminaries of the present age enlightening their respective spheres without being overpowered by their attraction or dazzled by their splendor. In this

retreat, our book is presented to the reader's eye as the enchanted glass of the magician, there to summon up at pleasure the various pictures requisite to attract his curiosity, arrest his attention, or excite his emulation; and on closing the volume, like the dissolving of the spell, he is instantly snatched from the midst of the tumultuous scenes in which he had been an imaginary spectator, and enjoys the pleasing reflection, that he reaps the fruits of that experience, those labours, contests and battles, which had been presented to his mind, without endangering his tranquillity or disturbing his repose.

Nor should it be forgotten that, by this peculiarity of situation, what is lost in one point is gained in another; as an opportunity is thus afforded of procuring information peculiar to this province, which would be dissipated and lost without a provincial Magazine in which to store it up for future service. No other part of the empire, perhaps, affords a greater abundance and variety of objects to attract the speculative mind, or better means to bring them into notice. An extensive tract of country, wonderfully diversified in soil and produce, a central town in the midst of a numerous population, an industrious disposition, an inquisitive mind, a persevering temper, wealth sufficient to support speculation without inducing indolence, a strong natural taste for science, not a little for works of fancy, each capable of high improvement, all these mark a spot where literature must flourish if its seed be permitted to germinate.

Such considerations induced a number of persons, equally anxious for the general dissemination of knowledge and the improvement of their native country, to unite their endeavours to draw forth these several causes into action; to elicit and collect every rill, which, if left to itself, must waste

away, or merely enamel the spot through which it trickled, and thus to form a copious and permanent stream, which, after serving to fertilize and adorn the country that gave it birth, might send, if not a celebrated, at least no contemptible supply to the great ocean of literature.

By uniting the stock of each individual, they resolved to form a capital to which others might hereafter contribute according to their abilities or inclination. By acting thus they hoped that diversity of talents would secure variety in the execution; and also be the means of preserving them from the fate of former adventurers, whose well-intended efforts have failed, principally through neglect of this precaution. These failures have been to them a salutary warning by which they have endeavoured to profit; as mariners make use of the wrecks of former navigators to avoid the shoals on which they foundered.

In forming the general plan, the London Monthly Magazine was chosen, not as a pattern to copy from with servility, but as a model to imitate; and we must add, not without a wish, though we can scarcely say, a hope, that the disciple may one day surpass the master. Like it, pleasure is rendered subsidiary to improvement; instruction is its leading characteristic, and entertainment a secondary consideration. Like it, also, fanciful decorations, intended rather to catch the eye than to inform the mind have been rejected. Others may choose the keen edge and sparkling brilliancy of the diamond; we prefer the solid influence and guiding attraction of the loadstone.

In selecting materials, every care has been taken to reject whatever could give just ground of offence to any particular class of readers, as it is an indisputable principle, that what is intended for the benefit of all, should

give needless cause of dislike to none. For this reason, theological controversies, and intemperate political discussions have been excluded. The former, as they are generally treated, are, to use the forcible language of a British divine, but a dark diabolical quarrel about religion; we therefore consign them to those writings of which they are the peculiar subject. As to the latter, the facts which give rise to those political differences that agitate the public mind must be recorded; but they shall be laid before the reader as they are, undisguised by party or prejudice, and should they at any time require explanation or remark, we trust that these shall be always dictated by the spirit of true constitutional patriotism.

Among the subjects which ought to form a necessary and principal part of a magazine published in Ireland and addressed to Irishmen, whatever relates to our native country should have the first place. Whatever information can be collected concerning the origin, antiquities, history, language, manners, or topography of this country, shall be sedulously collected and laid before the reader. The connection between this island and those parts of the world where knowledge is supposed to have had its birth, has been long matter of ingenious conjecture, and from the persevering inquiries of those who have examined and compared the circumstances of both, is every day confirmed by more substantial proofs. Here then is a field of speculation not merely to the Irish antiquarian but to the universal philosopher; not discovering the rise and tracing the progress of a single insulated people, but developing the origin of nations. To the lover of such speculations we offer to hold the lamp, to guide him to those relics that lie beneath his feet before they be totally concealed

by the ever-increasing darkness of antiquity.

But these however interesting, form but one part of our design. The picture we present, should, like the shield of Achilles, be divided into compartments, each different from its neighbour, though pleasing in itself. For another of these the history of modern Europe affords a subject. In the eventful crisis in which we live, kingdoms and states which had long held the first rank in Europe, have been overwhelmed by violence or sunk into imbecility; some, formerly unknown, have started up into notice; while others, which appeared exhausted by the violence of their former efforts at superiority, have been roused again into action, and exhibited a degree of energy more suitable to their former fame than their present resources. To exhibit to the view such as have risen in this great political ferment, to trace the various circumstances of their rise, to point out the causes that precipitated the fall of others, must afford subject for important and interesting reflections.

To this head may be referred Biography. By recording the life of an illustrious character, we record the history of the time in which he flourished; and by considering each event as connected with the several periods of his life, this portion of history separated from the great chain of events assumes a beginning, middle, and end, which render it complete in itself, by bestowing on it the unity essential to the perfection of any subject. Nor is this the only advantage resulting from this department of history. We here behold public characters stripped of those adventitious circumstances which spread an unreal lustre over them. We trace them to their retirement, their privacy, and view them in those unguarded moments when the mind un-

bends. At such a time the real character is best discovered. A single glance or turn of the countenance serves the skilful physiognomist as a clue to unravel a whole line of character, so a short anecdote, a single burst of nature, may unfold a tissue of circumstances which had been hitherto enveloped in impenetrable mystery.

As general biography furnishes a key to general history, so the lives of literary men give us much insight into the state of knowledge. But as such sketches may not always be obtained, and as it is hoped that this work, of which we now draw the outline, will be judged by its adherence rather to the spirit than the letter of the prospectus; we shall always consider it better wholly to omit this department, than to fill the page devoted to instruction with an insipid, barren relation of lives which excite but little interest, or afford few subjects for reflection.

The languages, both ancient and modern, offer another extensive field of information. Essays on the works of celebrated authors, enquiries into the comparative merits of those who have entered on the same career, critical remarks on detached passages, translations from writers little known, any of these when introduced judiciously and with moderation will generally meet with a favourable reception. In this part one leading principle shall be to encourage and improve the prevailing taste for the study of our national tongue, to which so many inducements conspire to lead us. But as this is a subject on which it is our intention to enlarge at some future period, any further notice of it at present would be premature.

To the inquirer after literary information we present a regular list of the publications of the preceding month taken from the earliest and most authentic sources. It is also our intention to give a review of

such as merit particular attention, especially those which have any relation to this part of the empire; and once in every quarter to give a short and concise character of all which have appeared during the preceding months.

To the merchant, manufacturer, farmer, and inquirer into nature, we present regular reports suitable to their various pursuits; commercial, agricultural, botanical, meteorological and medical; and shall also add in every number one or more essays on some of these subjects.

Works of fancy, though they do not hold the first place in our estimation, shall not be altogether overlooked. We do not forget the unstrung bow. They shall be inserted, but sparingly and with selection; never forgetting, as has been already hinted, that even what amuses the imagination should have an indirect tendency to improve the heart.

Among these, or rather as the link which connects the PLEASING with the USEFUL, may be classed essays on the manners and habits of society at present. These light sketches of man as he is, in whatever shape they have appeared, when executed with fidelity and judgment, have never failed to please. Considered in themselves, they serve to direct the attention to numberless objects which are unnoticed only because they are habitual; but when considered as part of a series first commenced by Steele, and continued, though with many interruptions, to the present day, they must excite a much more lively interest, by tracing out, as in a series of paintings, the variations of those fluctuating and evanescent fashions which have successively fascinated and disgusted the greater part of polished society.

Of poetry we shall be cautious in

our promises. For though this part of Ireland has produced so many specimens of a rich poetical vein, that we may safely reckon on a copious supply, every way worthy of the lovers of this species of composition, we feel ourselves bound to separate with the most scrupulous exactitude, the metal from the dross, and to issue none but what bears the undoubted stamp of sterling merit. But, on the other hand, let not those who wish to subject their productions to this assay, be discouraged at our declaration: let it be remembered that, though many worthless pieces have forced themselves into notice through such a channel, the public are indebted to a periodical publication for the two most finished productions of their kind, that have principally tended to the well deserved celebrity of a Goldsmith and a Gray.

These, with the usual account of monthly occurrences, are the principal sources whence our materials are to be drawn; but should any thing which may promote our main objects, present itself, though not included in their range, it shall be immediately seized; and we earnestly call upon all who are actuated with a similar desire of improving the minds and exalting the literary character of their countrymen, to step forward, and range themselves beneath the banner which is now unfurled. Individual exertions alone can serve the common cause. Literary assistance therefore we earnestly solicit, and will thankfully receive. We shall also feel ourselves equally obliged to Correspondents who furnish us with hints which may serve to point out an error, or lead to improvement in our design, or in the mode of execution. The public voice shall direct those labours, which are solely directed to the public good.